

# MONTEREY COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH LEN FOSTER, Director

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## Press Release

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**Contact: Dr. Hugh F. Stallworth  
Health Officer  
Health Department  
County of Monterey  
(831) 755-8942**

### **Avoid accidental carbon monoxide poisoning**

*The Monterey County Health Department offers tips to avoid accidental injury or death from carbon monoxide.*

*Salinas* – During the winter months, cold rainy weather is a reality. During these miserable weather conditions, it is important to keep in mind the threat of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. The Monterey County Health Department would like to remind everyone that the best defense against carbon monoxide poisoning is prevention.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous and odorless gas that does not irritate, but can kill a person in minutes. Carbon monoxide is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal is burned.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning is preventable” says Dr. Hugh Stallworth, Health Officer for the Monterey County, “Generators, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices should **never** be used inside a home, basement, garage, or camper - or even outside near an open window.”

*Follow these tips to avoid accidental injury or death from carbon monoxide:*

- Never burn charcoal inside homes, tents, campers, vans, trucks, garages, or mobile homes. Do not burn charcoal in the fireplace in your home.
- Do not warm up your vehicle by idling the engine inside an attached garage
- Have your gas or oil burning furnace inspected for leaks and serviced by a professional each year
- Hire a professional to inspect and service all chimneys and vents. A blocked vent (from soot or a birds nest, for example) can cause carbon monoxide to back up into the house
- Avoid combustion “space heaters” unless there is an exhaust vent. Don't place a space heater within three feet of anything that may catch on fire, and never cover a space heater.
- Install certified carbon monoxide warning devices in hallways outside bedrooms. These devices should not replace the other prevention steps.

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*Get to know the symptoms of CO poisoning.*

At moderate levels, you or your family can get severe headaches, become dizzy, mentally confused, nauseated, or faint. You can even die if these levels persist for a long time. Low levels can cause shortness of breath, mild nausea, and mild headaches, and may have longer-term effects on your health. Since many of these symptoms are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning, or other illnesses, you may not think that carbon monoxide poisoning could be the cause.

Don't ignore symptoms, especially if more than one person is feeling them. If you believe you or someone else is experiencing carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows. Turn off combustion appliances and leave the house.
- Go to an emergency room. Be sure to tell the physician that you suspect carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- Be prepared to answer the following questions: Is anyone else in your household complaining of similar symptoms? Did everyone's symptoms appear about the same time? Are you using any fuel-burning appliances in the home? Has anyone inspected your appliances lately? Are you certain they are working properly?

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Attached: Fact Sheet – Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – English and Spanish